

Proposed Janney/Tenley Library/Roadside Partnership - Updated FAQ 6/24/07

We're revising our answers as our understanding of the proposal evolves. Shaded text indicates answers with substantive change.

Who is proposing this?

Roadside Development, the company that built the CityLine condos across the street from Janney.

What's in it for Janney?

Conceivably, this project could move Janney to the top of DCPS Capital Improvement Plan and lock in funding for Janney's modernization right away. DCPS would then start its Feasibility Study to determine the programmatic requirements for Janney. The Feasibility Study would determine where the addition would go, what was in it, and exactly how many square feet are needed.

A unique benefit of the public/private development proposal would be moving the current parking lot underground, eliminating cars from the school grounds and providing more contiguous play area that could be configured as desired.

However, a residential building would be built over portion of what is now the soccer field.

What, specifically, is Roadside Development proposing?



Roadside Development's concept proposes three major components to this project. 1. A new Tenley-Friendship Library. 2. A residential building that would be constructed partially above the new library and partially on a section of Janney's soccer field, with underground parking for residents, the school and the library. 3. Complete modernization of Janney including an addition the exact scope of which would be determined according to DCPS design guidelines (Master Education Specification).

On the left is a sketch from Roadside Development. The school addition is on the hillside west of the current building. A new soccer field is behind the school.



This image may help illustrate the major elements of the proposal. The purple area shows, approximately, the portion of Janney's soccer field that would be covered by the new residential building. The green area is the current parking lot, which would disappear, allowing most of that space to be used as a play area, or as part of a new soccer field. The blue area could be the site of the new addition. The demountables aren't shown on this image. They would be removed.

How big would the residential building be?

Six stories high, reaching 65 feet above the average elevation of the street frontage. The building would be about the same height as the condos at Cityline, across Albemarle. Roadside's representatives have said it could include between 100 and 150 condos or apartments. In comparison, there are 204 units in Cityline.

How far would it be from the school?

According to Roadside's architect, it would be at least 85-90 feet from the school.

How would cars reach the underground parking lot?

There would be access from Wisconsin alongside the alley beside St. Ann's. St. Ann's owns the land they use as an alley. The developers would like to obtain an easement allowing for construction of a wider, safer alley, to be shared by both. If an easement is not obtained, the existing driveway with its curb cut on Wisconsin Avenue will be used.

How much parking would there be for Janney?

The first level of the underground parking lot would contain parking spaces for the library and the school. Roadside is assuming that 50-55 of these spaces would be assigned to the school, and 20 to the library. The Janney spaces would be available for library users during evenings and weekends. Residents would park on lower floors which would not be accessible to the school or library.

Does this mean that Janney would lose its soccer field?

No, maintaining a soccer field is a top priority for Janney! We would relocate the field elsewhere on the school property. There are a couple of different possibilities, not only the one shown in Roadside's sketch. Principal Cartland has expressed a desire to keep the soccer field at its current size and possibly put it in the current parking area so as to preserve the work done last summer to rebuild the upper playground.

How much land would Janney give up for the residential building, compared to the space the school would gain by putting the parking underground?

With the proposed concept, approximately 11,000 SF (eight percent of the Janney site) will be used for the residential building. However, the school will regain the use of the existing 11,700 SF parking lot for play.

How large is the proposed addition to Janney?

The addition sketched here is just one possibility, one that was not informed by a DCPS Facilities Study. DCPS demographers have determined that the target student population of a modernized Janney is 550 students. Their rule of thumb is to allow 150 SF per student, yielding a recommendation for 82,500 SF in the modernized Janney. The addition pictured here is much smaller than that, yet meets the critical shortages of the existing building as conveyed to Roadside by Principal Cartland and the SIT.

What is shown is a two-story structure (13,000 SF) just west of the current school, built into the side of the hill and using some of the space where a demountable now sits. The addition would be connected to the main building on both first and second floors. One floor would hold a gym (4700 SF) and the other floor would contain four classrooms (each 700 SF) plus a library (2200 SF). The addition would also have bathrooms. This would be a net increase of three classrooms over Janney's current configuration. (The demountables, with their three classrooms, would go away, but the new library would allow our existing library to be converted back into two classrooms.)

The proposed design includes a green roof that would create potential learning opportunities. The initial design has the gym on the second floor. Placing classrooms on top of the gym would require additional structural support, since the gym spans the building with no interior load bearing walls.

Does Janney need this much additional space?

Janney's in-boundary enrollment has been climbing. There is no reason to anticipate that this trend will end anytime soon. The school needs one additional classroom for the 2007-2008 school year, even with Pre-K enrollment cut down to half a class. Because of space limitations, Janney has not been able to accept out-of-bounds students in recent years.

The lack of space and general overcrowding has affected the school in several ways. There are a number of teachers and other professionals who are working in inadequate spaces. This includes the ESL teacher, the Occupational Therapist, and the Speech Language Pathologist who all work out of converted closets that are far too small. The school Social Worker and School Psychologist have no space dedicated to their needs and must “make do” despite the confidential nature of their work. The school gym is also used as a cafeteria and auditorium and is insufficient in size for all three purposes. The lack of classroom space is causing the school to either add more portable classrooms, which take up playground space, or to allow class sizes to rise dramatically. Finally, the lack of classroom space causes us to regularly turn away many in-boundary students for Pre-K each year.

On the other hand, the overcrowding should ease a bit when sixth grade moves to Deal, anticipated in the 2009-2010 school year. At that point we should be able to accommodate more Pre-K students.

DCPS demographers are planning for a 550-student population at Janney. If DCPS should close Hearst, some part of that school’s boundary will be added to Janney’s.

Are renovations at Janney part of the plan?

Yes. The Capital Improvement Plan calls for a fully modernized 82,500 SF Janney. Priorities for this renovation include major upgrades to the electrical system, heating and air conditioning, and an elevator.

What are the financial benefits to the city?

Roadside’s representatives say that their residential development could generate approximately \$9 million for the city from the sale of development rights, and more importantly, could add 120 new residences to the city’s tax rolls, estimated to raise property tax revenues by over \$0.5 M annually.

Is there any guarantee that funds generated by this project will be designated specifically for improvements at Janney, rather than simply going into the city’s coffers?

The DC government owns the land, and DCPS controls its use. The Mayor is now in charge of both. He will decide how the land is used, and where the revenue from such a joint development project would be spent. In the Oyster School project a few years ago, the private development of part of the school site was used specifically to rebuild that school. The situation in DC is different now. There is \$2B allocated in the city’s budget for school modernization. There is \$16M budgeted to rebuild the Tenley-Friendship Library.

The financial benefits of the proposal are being evaluated from a city-wide perspective, rather than as specifically applied to each project. It appears that DCPL would spend its DC budget allocation (\$16M) on construction of the new Library, and DCPS would allocate and spend whatever amount is necessary to construct what it plans through the Feasibility Study for Janney. Proceeds from this partnership would most likely accrue to the CIP and DCPL’s capital budgets as determined by the Mayor’s office.

There is an advantage to the community of this indirect link in the financing. Decisions that make the proposed residential building less lucrative to the city (fewer units, affordable units) would not directly reduce the scope of school or library construction.

Isn’t DCPS already planning to carry out renovations at Janney?

The DCPS Capital Improvement Plan currently foresees spending \$22.1 M (i2006 dollars) on improvements at Janney in the year 2013, with the Facilities Study starting in 2011. The CIP is a 10-year plan, and DC Council has stated they will not approve a 10-year plan because of cost. They have asked DCPS to provide a 15-year plan. In a prior 15-year plan, construction on Janney was scheduled to start in 2015.

What guarantee do we have that Janney would move to the front of the CIP if the PPP goes forward?

The Janney community needs to get the message out -- Janney support hinges on the assurance that the modernization is moved up. Kimberly Driggins (DCPS Office of Strategic Funding Opportunities) and Jane Morrissey (DCPS Office of Facilities Management, Planning, Design and Construction) have both said in meetings that the biggest benefit that DCPS sees in this proposal is having Janney modernized quickly. The SIT, PTA and Councilmember Cheh are committed to a speedier modernization as part of any PPP, and will be advocates for this.

Who will decide whether this happens?

First of all, both the library system and DCPS would have to agree to it. Ginnie Cooper, the head of DC Public Libraries, has said that she'd be happy to cooperate with a joint development plan, as long as it moves ahead quickly. The library is proceeding with plans to build a new, stand-alone library on the site, and Cooper does not want to put that on hold while waiting for the community and officials to make up their minds about an alternative. Based on the library's current timetable, this could mean that the Roadside proposal would have to be approved by the end of this year in order to be viable.

DCPS is in transition due to the Mayoral takeover. It is unclear what the decision-making process would be. Kimberly Driggins has said that DCPS would support a public/private development proposal (PPDP) for Janney, if that is what the community wants. She also reported that the DC regulations that apply to PPDPs are being revised. Representatives from other parts of the DC government, including the office of the Mayor and Councilmember Mary Cheh, have stated that they will support this project if the community supports it.

The developers are planning to seek approval for this project through a Planned Unit Development (PUD) process. It would be submitted to the ANC as well as the Zoning Commission.

Would this project necessarily be accomplished with a sole-source contract or could it be competitively bid?

Either is possible. DCPS Office of Strategic Funding Opportunities presented a flowchart illustrating both possible paths. Kimberly Driggins stated that the standard for a sole-source is uniqueness, and desire for expediency or having a good unsolicited proposal is not sufficient to justify sole-source contracting.

How long would it take before this could be finished?

After the project was approved and construction documents drafted, construction of the library and residences could take two to three years, because it requires a lot of work underground. The Janney addition, on the other hand, could be built much more quickly, within six months or so, because it wouldn't require lots of digging.

This sounds like an incredibly complex deal. Who would manage this project and coordinate across all the government agencies and their approval processes?

The Mayor has assigned Eric Scott of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development's Office to be the point person. He is investigating the steps needed to get this done, if the community supports it.

Why not combine the school library and the Tenley-Friendship Library? Can this be considered as part of the plan?

DC Public Libraries is already moving ahead with redevelopment plans for several branch libraries, including Tenley. Combining the two projects is still a possibility if the decision to proceed is made this summer. Both projects require about a year for design. The library is just beginning that year now; if we decide to move forward soon, it is still possible for both projects to proceed on the same timeline.

Could we potentially get a much bigger Tenley-Friendship Library than planned with DCPL money alone? This might be wise, since the Library would be unable to expand in the future.

The Library Board of Trustees are concerned about equity across the branches, and would like to keep them all at approximately the same size. So it is not likely that they would support a much larger branch for Tenleytown. There are a generous number of branch libraries in the DC library system. There are several very small libraries less than a mile apart. DCPL would not expand a branch library should demand for library services in a community increase—they would add a new branch library to the system, instead.

Must I make up my mind about this now?

Haste makes waste, of course, but there is some time pressure because of the library's plans to move ahead with its own library. Once the library actually starts building a separate, stand-alone building, a joint project won't be possible anymore. This could happen within a year.

Where can I get more information or respond to this?

You could talk to Janney's representatives to Mary Cheh's Taskforce, Principal Cartland, Sherry Ettleson (SIT), and Allison Feeny (PTA).